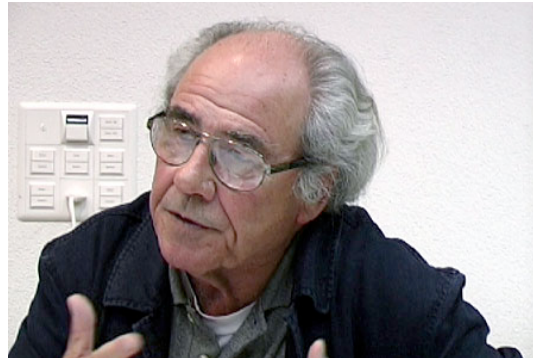
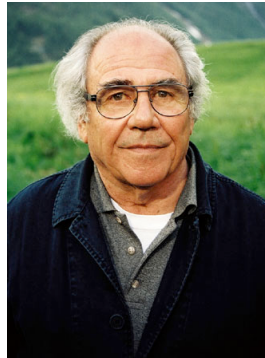


Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulations, 1981

Lecture Notes

Jean Baudrillard



Simulacra and Simulations

“ It is more difficult for us to imagine the real, History, the depth of time, or three-dimensional space, just as before it was difficult from our real world perspective to imagine a virtual universe or the fourth-dimension. The simulacra will be ahead of us everywhere. The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth — it is the truth which conceals that there is none. Since the world is on a delusional course, we must adopt a delusional standpoint towards the world.”

“Everywhere one seeks to produce meaning, to make the world signify, to render it visible. We are not, however, in danger of lacking meaning; quite the contrary, we are gorged with meaning and it is killing us”

Jean Baudrillard

Simulacra and Simulations

- Borges' story of the map as an analogy of simulacra
- The hyperreal as the copy of the copy which becomes the "reality"
- Signs and systems, let's take a step back to de Saussure

Sign



Signifier: The word "open"

Signified concept: The idea that the shop is open for business

Ferdinand de Saussure offers a 'dyadic' or two-part model of the sign, which is not a link between a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-pattern.

Simulacra and Simulations

- A simulation is an imitation of a real state or object. It can be used in many contexts including the modeling of natural systems (ie. Disney World), human systems (ie. The behavior of a “sick” patient), and in technology (or the technology of defense where the goal is to test real-world practical scenarios) to gain insight into those systems.

Simulacra and Simulations

- Simulacrum (plural: simulacra) is from the Latin, *simulare*, “to make like, to put on an appearance of”. Put simply, we can think of the simulacrum as the sign. For example, the cult image which represents a deity is a simulacrum. A painted still-life of a bowl of fruit and a company logo are both simulacra. However, Baudrillard takes us one step beyond this.

Simulacra and Simulations

- Simulacra becomes more specific in Baudrillard's semiotic context. Here, the simulacra is a copy of a copy which has been so dissipated in its relation to the original that it can no longer be said to be a copy. The simulacrum, therefore, stands on its own as a copy without a model. For example, the cartoon Betty Boop was based on singer Helen Kane. Kane, however, rose to fame imitating Annette Hanshaw. Hanshaw and Kane have fallen into relative obscurity, while Betty Boop remains an icon of the flapper.*

* This is all available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulacra>

Simulacra and Simulations

- The divine irrelevance of images:
- Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). For example, a patient who feigns illness demonstrates symptoms and can be believed as ill.
- Conversely, simulation starts from the Utopia of this principle of equivalence and inverts its value. To continue the example, the feigned illness becomes the reality: the patient is ill (as opposed to the previous value of the patient as healthy, but faking illness)
- Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation (faking illness), simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum (illness to the capacity of how we have previously recognized illness).

Simulacra and Simulations

- Hyperreal and the imaginery:
- Disneyland:
- “You park outside, queue up inside, and are totally abandoned at the exit. In this imaginary world the only phantasmagoria is in the inherent warmth and affection of the crowd, and in that aufficiently excessive number of gadgets used there to specifically maintain the multitudinous affect. The contrast with the absolute solitude of the parking lot - a veritable concentration camp - is total. Or rather: inside, a whole range of gadgets magnetize the crowd into direct flows; outside, solitude is directed onto a single gadget: the automobile. By an extraordinary coincidence (one that undoubtedly belongs to the peculiar enchantment of this universe), this deep-frozen infantile world happens to have been conceived and realized by a man who is himself now cryogenized; Walt Disney, who awaits his resurrection at minus 180 degrees centigrade.”

Simulacra and Simulations

- Putting it to the test:

What would happen if you were to fake a hold-up at a 7-11? What would happen if you walked in wearing a ski mask, a black shirt, black pants or jeans, and used a fake gun, while screaming at the counter-person, “This is a hold up. Give me your money or I’ll shoot!” If you claimed after the event that you were only simulating a hold-up, what would be your outcome?